

57
APOSTOLIC PREACHING

CONSIDERED

THREE DISCOURSES.

DELIVERED

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S E R M O N I.



I COR. i. 21.

“FOR AFTER THAT IN THE WISDOM OF GOD,
THE WORLD BY WISDOM KNEW NOT GOD,
IT PLEASED GOD BY THE FOOLISHNESS OF
PREACHING TO SAVE THEM THAT BELIEVE.”

THE best method, in my judgment, of determining with accuracy, how far the light of nature is sufficient to lead mankind to the knowledge of the true GOD and their duty to him, is, to attend to the condition of the Heathen world : Not of the most barbarous and ignorant, but of the inhabitants of Greece and Rome at the periods when they were most celebrated for learning and refinement. Even then they were gross idolators ; and many of their sentiments and practices were shocking
to

to decency and common sense. † Whence it appears, that with all their wisdom and learning, they quite mistook the nature of God and religion : hence divine revelation became absolutely necessary. “ For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God ” — The meaning is, That altho’ the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly

† “ The sports of the gladiators, unnatural lusts, the licentiousness of divorce, the exposing of infants and slaves, the procuring abortions, the public establishment of stews ; all subsisted at Rome, and not one of them was condemned, or hinted at in Tully’s offices. — The most indecent revelling, drunkenness, and lewdness were practised at the feasts of Bacchus, Ceres, and Cybele ; and their greatest philosophers never remonstrated against it.

“ The Heathen philosophers, though they have advanced fine sayings and sublime precepts, in some points of morality, have grossly failed in others : such as the toleration or encouragement of revenge, slavery, unnatural lust, fornication, suicide, &c. — For example : *Plato* expressly allowed of excessive drinking at the festivals of Bacchus, — *Maximus Tyrius* forbade to pray, &c.

“ *Aristotle*

clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God-head, the world knew him not ; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." [Rom. i. 20—23.]

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" *Aristotle* and *Plato* both direct that means should be used to prevent weak children being brought up.—*Cato* commends a young man for frequenting the stewes.—*Cicero* expressly speaks of fornication as a thing never found fault with —*Plato* recommends a community of women, and advises that soldiers should not be restrained from sensual indulgence, even the most unnatural species of it.—*Xenophon* relates, without any marks of reprobation, that natural lust was encouraged by the laws of several Grecian states.—*Solon*, their great law giver forbid it only to slaves.—*Diogenes* inculcated, and openly practised the most brutal lust.—*Zeno* and *Cato* both killed themselves."

[Bishop of CARLISLE's reflections on the life and character of Christ,—Appendix.]

It has been the method of the infinite God, both before and since the fall, to leave mankind to act out their own characters, and not to interpose until the necessity of his interposition became evident. Thus it was in the case of our first parents : he could have prevented their apostacy, but did not. After they had sinned, and were distressed with conscious guilt, he revealed to them Jesus Christ under the idea of the seed of the woman. And when the world was overspread with sin and ignorance, and by wisdom knew him not, having had the fairest trial, he was pleased, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Let us

I. ACCOUNT for Paul's use of this expression, *the foolishness of preaching*.

II. ASCERTAIN what kind of preaching he had in view.

III. PROVE that God hath been pleased to put the most distinguished honor on it, by making it the means of *saving them that believe*.

I. OUR first inquiry is, Why does the Apostle use the expression, *foolishness of preaching* ?

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WE are confident, my brethren, he does not speak in his *own*, but in *borrowed* language. He must have been a fool indeed, to have engaged in a service which he knew would reproach his own understanding. Rather he has respect to the common opinion of the Greeks, who are said to *seek after wisdom*; meaning the wisdom of this world. "We preach Christ crucified, says this apostle, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." [Verses 23, 24.]—This single passage accounts for Paul's use of the expression. The preaching of Christ crucified was foolishness to the learned and unregenerate Greeks.

II. WE pass to consider what kind of preaching it was, the apostle had respect to.

THERE are certain sentiments that the world can hear with patience and approbation: there are others to which the hearts of natural men rise in opposition.

1. Few, if any, object to *moral subjects*, because it is a just and general opinion, That all men ought to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Neither Jews nor Greeks would take offence at this kind of preaching ; nor even men of vicious characters ; unless the preacher should happen to fix on the vices of some of his friends, and censure them with severity. In that case resentment would naturally be excited, and he might expect to be charged with being too *pointed* or *personal* in the pulpit : especially if he had previously known on whom the reproof would fall.

IN such circumstances what shall a preacher do ? Shall he cease to expose vice, because some of his friends are vicious ? God forbid ! Far better will it be for him to lose the attachment of the best parishioner he has ; and to make a sacrifice of his whole temporal interest, than to be unfaithful to his God, to his conscience and to the people of his charge.—The way for mankind to secure their feelings from injury on such occasions, is for them to be virtuous. But if they will violate the laws of God,
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and injure society by their wicked examples; they must bear the reproach.

No *prudent* man will introduce personal matters into the pulpit ; nor will an *honest* man be afraid of commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.—However, as moral subjects are generally approved, because agreeable to the reason and nature of things, he has but little to fear on this head ; except he should be too evangelical in his manner of treating them : for the law may be handled *evangelically*, and the gospel may be preached *legally*.

2. WE may also insist freely on the *christian tempers* without giving offence ; because, like moral subjects, they command respect from mankind in general ; who readily acknowledge, that all men ought to be meek, patient, charitable, ready to forgive, &c.—And it is confessed, that these are very important subjects, and should frequently be brought into public view, as evidences of the truth of personal religion : for, *if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his.* [Rom. viii. 9.]

3. WE

3. WE may also pass without reproach perhaps, if we *touch lightly* on the sinfulness of mankind ; and assure them, If they do what they can, God will co-operate with their endeavours, and grant them salvation.—Such a representation of things is flattering to the pride of man, because it extenuates human depravity, and divides the glory of salvation between Christ and the sinner.—In this case the offence of the cross ceaseth.

4. It seems to be a very popular opinion, “That articles of faith are of no great importance, provided a man’s life be good.”—If so, it follows, that it was not *necessary* that Jesus Christ should come into the world to *teach* and *save* mankind ; because, according to the above proposition, their salvation might have been accomplished without it. For whether we believe in Jesus Christ or Confucius is of no consequence provided the life be good.—It amounts therefore to a rejection of divine revelation, particularly of christianity.

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" SOME persons, upon pretence of the sufficiency of the light of nature, avowedly reject all revelation, as, in its very notion, incredible, and what must be fictitious. And indeed it is certain, no revelation would have been given, had the light of nature been sufficient in such a sense, as to render one not wanting and useless. But no man, in seriousness and simplicity of mind, can possibly think it so, who considers the state of religion in the heathen world, before revelation, and its present state in those places which have borrowed no light from it.

" THERE are other persons, not to be ranked with these, who seem to be getting in a way of neglecting, and, as it were, overlooking revelation, as of small importance, provided natural religion be kept to." With little regard, either to the evidence of the former, or to the objections against it, and even upon supposition of its truth ; " The only design of it," say they, " must be to establish a belief of the moral " system of nature, and to enforce the practice " of natural piety and virtue. The belief and " practice of these things were, perhaps, much
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“ promoted by the first publication of christian-
 “ ity : But whether they are believed and prac-
 “ tised, upon the evidence and motives of na-
 “ ture or of revelation, is no great matter.” *
 This way of considering revelation, though it is
 not the same with the former, yet borders near-
 ly upon it, and very much runs up into it : †
 —that is, into deism. This I apprehend will
 appear by comparing the principle we oppose,
 with our Lord’s commission to his apostles,
 [Mark 16. 15, 16.] “ Go ye into all the world,
 and preach the gospel to every creature. He that
 believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but
 he that believeth not shall be damned.” To
 which may be added the following solemn passage
 of Peter concerning Christ, delivered by him when
 he was filled with the Holy Ghost—[Acts 4. 12.]
 “ Neither is there salvation in any other : for
 there is none other name under heaven given
 among men, whereby we must be saved.”

If we deny the truth of these scriptures the
 charge of deism is fixed on us : if we admit it,
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* Aug. in Psa. 31.

† Bishop BUTLER’S analogy. Edit. 5th, p. 171—173.

we can no longer treat christianity with indifference, but must confess that it is of infinite importance to mankind both in its *principles* and *practises*.

To ascertain what christianity is, as taught by Christ and his apostles, we must search the New Testament.

THE *foolishness of preaching* mentioned in the text, the apostle explains by saying, *We preach Christ crucified*.—[Ver. 23.] This general expression comprehends, I suppose, the various subjects of the ministry of the apostles ; which I proceed to consider.

MORE cannot reasonably be expected under this head, than that the preacher should give a *sketch* of the plan of apostolic preaching. A full discussion of the subject would fill volumes ; and will employ the whole time of the ministers of Christ, provided they are properly attentive to the duties of their profession.

1st. THE apostles insisted frequently on the great principles, called, *natural religion* : Such as the being and attributes of God,—his creation and government of the universe—his love of virtue and hatred of vice—and that he will finally render to every man according to his works. These principles are fundamental to all true religion ; and are blended with christianity, which “is a republication of them : and which is very material, it teaches natural religion in its genuine simplicity ; free from those superstitions with which it was totally corrupted, and under which it was in a manner lost.*”

If so, natural religion owes much to christianity. Besides, it comprehends all the great principles of natural religion, and makes us acquainted with the method of our redemption by Christ; concerning which the light of nature leaves us in total darkness.

THUS viewed christianity may be considered as a *new edition* of natural religion, with *additions* of
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* Ibid.

the greatest importance to the world.—Let mankind determine then, which has the preference : natural religion detached from christianity ; or christianity as comprehending all the great principles of natural religion in their most pure state ; and at the same time revealing to us God's eternal purpose of mercy to sinners thro' Jesus Christ.

2dly. THE *universal corruption of the world* is another part of apostolic preaching. In Rom. iii. Paul considers this subject in a most explicit and decided manner, where he takes a comparative view of Jews and Gentiles. “What then are we better than they ? No, in no wise : for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.” And after he had quoted several passages from the Old Testament in support of the affecting truth, he adds, “Now we know that what things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law : that every mouth may be stopped, and *all the world* may become guilty before God.—For *all have sinned*, and have come short of the glory of God.” [ver. 19—23.] And so far as our reading and observation

tion extend, we find the melancholy truth exemplified.

3dly. THE sacred writers assure us that all men, considered in unbelief, are in a condition of *total depravity*. [Gen. vi. 5.] We read, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that *every imagination* of the thoughts of his heart was *only evil continually*."—Jesus Christ declares, "For out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." [Matt. xv. 19.] If so, the heart of man is the fountain of iniquity.—In John iii. 6. after Christ had spoken of the new birth to Nicodemus, he adds, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;"—that is, altogether sinful. Thus Paul uses the term *flesh* repeatedly. [Rom. vii. 5, &c.—] "For they that are after the *flesh*," that is, influenced by a sinful nature, "do mind the things of the *flesh*"—"So then they that are in the *flesh* cannot please God;" because the *carnal mind is enmity against him*. This short sentence is remarkably descriptive of the total sinfulness of the human heart.

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By this depravity inspired writers do not mean, that there is any loss of the natural faculties of the soul ; these remain entire amidst the ruins of the fall : man has reason, understanding, will and affections ; but that he is destitute of a spiritual taste, and under the constant influence of aversion to God.—If the sinner's heart was right in a moral sense, I can conceive of no remaining inability to love God for his own sake, and to live to his glory. The essence of religion is love ; and the essence of depravity or wickedness is enmity of heart to God. And in this awful condition the sinner is, as long as he remains in unregeneracy.

4thly. IN connection with this representation of human nature, the apostles endeavoured to awaken the attention of their hearers to the *infinite danger* in which they were. Often did they thunder in their ears the terrors of the law ; saying, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” [Gal. 3. 10.] “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha,” [1 Cor. 16. 22.] — “When the
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Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power : when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe—in that day.” [2 Theff. i. 7—II.]

WE see that they considered mankind as consisting of two classes, the righteous and the wicked ; and addressed them in language adapted to their respective characters. They did not preach to a promiscuous assembly as if they were all saints ; but assured the ungodly that they were in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity ; and that should they die in that condition, the wrath of God would abide upon them for ever. But if any of the people were pricked in the heart, and cried out, “ Men and brethren what shall we do ? ” —

5thly. THEY

5thly. THEY preached Christ to them as the *end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*. "For I determined, says Paul to the Corinthians, not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." [1 Cor. ii. 2.] This was their darling theme, and the only remedy for sin-sick souls.

HAD a sermon been delivered in the apostolic age, to a christian assembly, that had but little of Christ in it, they would at once have concluded, the preacher had forgot his errand; and with the disappointed woman at the sepulchre, have cried out, "They have taken away my Lord out of his place, and I know not where they have laid him." Where should Jesus Christ be as the object of affection, if not in the hearts and conversation of his disciples?—Where indeed, if not in the preaching of his ministers?

THE apostles preached Christ in his TRUE and PROPER DEITY as essential to the christian scheme. This great truth they had learned from his own mouth. [John x. 31—39.]—

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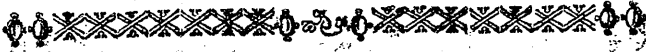
“ I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones to stone him. Jesus saith unto them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father ; for which of these works do ye stone me ? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not ; but for blasphemy ; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.”—Here was a most favorable opportunity for Christ to have disclaimed all pretensions to the Godhead.—He had only to inform them, that they had mistaken his meaning ; that he laid no claim to divinity ; but meant to assure them, that he was one with God his Father in *design* and *operation*, not in *nature*.—Shocked at the idea of blasphemy, would he not at once have acquitted himself of the charge ?—Would not any of his apostles, or any good man on earth who had been so grossly mistaken, have rectified the mistake as soon as possible ? Our Lord’s not doing it, when every circumstance called for the frank acknowledgment, is in my judgment, no inconsiderable proof that he was a divine person.

If we consider him in no other light than as a teacher sent from God to instruct and to reform mankind, it seems to have been his duty to remove the prejudices which the Jews had imbibed against him ; that so he might answer the design of his mission. Instead of this, he makes an appeal to his miraculous works, as proof that he was in the Father, and the Father in Him. The Jews still believed, that he made himself God ; therefore “ they sought to take him ; but he escaped out of their hands.” He left them, my brethren, under the influence of a very important error, provided he was not really God. “ Nor did our Lord give any intimation, says one, that they had misunderstood him ; nor yet the evangelist, as he does in several other instances of much less importance ; which silence is a strong presumptive proof, that they were not under a mistake about the sense of the words : for such a mistake, on the principles of our opposers, might have been an occasion of idolatry in them ; and a mistake of that kind, not remarked by the historian, would be calculated to answer the same pernicious purpose in succeeding generations.—But if he refused to correct
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so dangerous a mistake on *their* account, yet was it not necessary that he should have done it on *ours*?—that when we read his gospel, we might not entertain the detestable thought, that he equalled himself with the Most High. If, however, he thought it proper not to explain himself, at that time; yet it might have been expected, that his disciples should have given us the true sense of the mysterious words, when they reported them.” *

* Dr. ABBADIE's treatise on *The Deity of Jesus Christ*, &c. p. 246, 247: in which this important subject is handled in a most masterly manner; and well merits the attention of both the friends and opposers of the doctrine.





S E R M O N II.



THE language and conduct of the disciples of Christ prove, that they received him as a divine person. John tells us [c.v.23:] That it is the will of God, "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father who hath sent him." Compared with Heb. i. 6. "And again when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." The best comment on such passages will probably be found, in the conduct of his immediate followers. If they, who were favored with divine inspiration, actually worshipped him, we may safely believe that they received him as very and eternal God. This then really was the case
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with Stephen. [Acts vii. 59.] “And they stoned Stephen calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”—Here we see a pious martyr in the hour of dissolution, addressing himself to Jesus Christ in a solemn act of religious worship : therefore we conclude Jesus Christ is truly God.

IN 2. Cor. xii. 8, 9. we observe that Paul prays to Christ when there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him : “For this thing, I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” What follows proves that by the LORD whom he addressed, CHRIST is intended. “Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the *power of Christ* may rest upon me.” The Lord had promised him that his grace should be sufficient for him ; this grace he calls the *power of Christ* ; signifying, that the LORD CHRIST, to whom he addressed himself, had given him this gracious answer.

THOUGHT

THOUGH there are many other texts in the writings of the apostles that are of the same import,* I shall only mention the following plain, decisive passage, [Rev. v. 11—end.] “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders : and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand ; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, AND UNTO THE LAMB FOR EVER AND EVER.”—I appeal to every unprejudiced mind, whether there can possibly be a more solemn act of *supreme* worship than this, which is ascribed equally to the LAMB that was slain, as to him that sitteth upon the throne ? And will any man after reading this passage, hesitate a moment, whether he ought to pay the highest

* John xiv. 1. Rom. x. 12, 13. Rom. xv. xii. 2 Cor. ix. 1. Acts ix. 14, &c.

highest honor to the Son of God ? who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.

WHAT idea would a man of common sense form of the character of Jesus Christ, upon reading Philip. ii. 6. " Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ? " Would he not naturally think, either that Jesus Christ is a divine person ; or that he was guilty of the most horrid impiety ? It would have been a robbery of the most blasphemous kind, for a creature, however exalted, to claim equality with JEHOVAH : and instead of his being celebrated for his humility, he ought to be considered as a monster of pride and wickedness. But if we admit the idea of his true and proper deity, we are at once led to admire his unparalleled condescension. " He who was in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God : But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death
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of the cross." [ver. 7, 8.] The moment we deny the divinity of Christ, I conceive we destroy the apostle's argument.

"THE following words, as they stand in our translation, go on to describe the excellency of his glory, which was so real and transcendent a glory, *that he thought it not robbery to be*—i. e. he thought himself entitled to be—*equal with God*. But I shall not insist upon this translation; for it is more agreeable to the apostle's argument, and to the language made use of, to suppose him to intend in these words, to express the first degree or instance of his humility, and that the verse should be rendered by words to this effect: Who being in the form of God, was not fond, or tenacious, of appearing as God; but made himself of no reputation. I shall not trouble you with the particular reasons of this rendering, which would lead us too far into critical enquiries: but which way soever the text be understood, the τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ will be found to belong to Jesus Christ. If he thought it not robbery to assume this equality with God, (whatever is meant by it,) undoubtedly he was equal:

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or, if it was the effect of his humility, that he did not hold or insist upon his equality with God, then certainly he had such an equality; for where is the humility of not insisting on, or not retaining an equality, which never did or could belong to him?"*

It was in the contemplation of this astonishing truth, that our apostle thus exclaims, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh"—[1 Tim. iii. 16.] That it was so, is a truth revealed, but the *manner* of it is past finding out.

To what hath been said on this subject I will only add [Col. ii. 9.] "For in him, i. e. Christ, dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." It seems that Paul could not say more than this to establish the deity of his Master. What a striking gradation is here—In Christ "dwells the GODHEAD"—"the FULNESS of the Godhead"—
yea,

* Ep. SHERLOCK's discourses on this passage. Vol. 4.
p. 24, 25.

yea, "ALL THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD BODILY."—Then surely he is very and eternal God. Let us then, my brethren, amidst the numerous attempts that are made to rob Christ of his essential glory, without any secret reserve, or double meaning, ascribe blessing, and honor, and glory, and power to Jesus Christ, our GOD and SAVIOR.

It would be easy to prove by the sacred scriptures, that the same divine names, titles, attributes and works are ascribed to Christ, that are ascribed to the Father; but I hope enough has been said to make it evident, that his true and proper deity was an essential part of apostolic preaching.

SEVERAL of the passages of scripture that we have been considering, prove also, the *incarnation* of the Son of God: or, that the divine and human natures were united in him. For instance, "*God was manifest in the flesh.*"—He that was in the *form of God* was found in *fashion as a man*. Also [Heb. ii. 16.] "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." The person spoken of is
Christ,

Christ, who existed prior to his birth of Mary in a nature different from that which he assumed. "Verily he took"—here we have a personal action: he who was properly divine, "took on him the seed, or nature, of Abraham." Thus the WORD was made *flesh*; i. e. became united to the nature of man.

I PASS to observe, That the apostles preached Christ as the *all atoning sacrifice for sin*. Peter declares that "he bare our sins in his own body on the tree."—This language he borrowed from Isaiah [liii. 4, 5.] "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for *our* transgressions, he was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of *our* peace was upon him; and with *his* stripes *we are healed*."—"He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "He died the just *for* the unjust that he might bring us to God," &c. Such is the current language of the Bible.

It is observable, that inspired writers lay the principal stress on his *death*. Paul says, "We have redemption *through his blood*"—that we are redeemed with the *precious blood of Christ*,—that he *died for our sins* ; not for his own, for he had none : "He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners."

"CHRIST's satisfaction for sin was not *only* by his last sufferings, though it was *principally* by them ; but all his sufferings, and all the humiliation that he was subject to from the first moment of his incarnation to his resurrection, were propitiatory or satisfactory."* All that he did and suffered make up that righteousness by which the believing sinner is justified. Through the whole he acted voluntarily : for he had power to lay down his life, and he had power to take it again ; but he knew that it was necessary that he should suffer these things, and enter into his glory ; therefore he became "obedient unto death even the death of the cross : " not as a martyr only to seal the truth of his own religion ;

* President EDWARD'S Hist. Redemp. last edi. p. 324.

gion ; but that he might put away sin by the sacrifice of himself : hence he is said to be “ the propitiation for our sins ;” [Rom. iii. 25.] not *metaphorically* but *really*.

6th. JESUS CHRIST having finished *his* part of the work of our redemption, ascended to the Father, and sent the Holy Ghost, whose peculiar office it is to take it up where he had left it, and to carry it on until the glorious plan shall be all accomplished.—“ It is expedient for you, said Christ to his disciples, that I go away ; for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” [John xiv. 7, 8.]

THE work of Jesus Christ is *for*, or in the room and stead of the sinner ; that God the Father might justify him consistent with his whole character.—The work of the Holy Spirit is carried on *in* the sinner, in order to reconcile him to God, and fit him for eternal life. Jesus Christ opens the way for his discharge from the

the curse of the law ; the Spirit of God makes him meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Both are absolutely necessary ; the latter no less than the former, because, “ Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” [Heb. xii. 14.]

It hath been proved already in a preceding part of the subject, that mankind are in a condition of total depravity : if so, their final condemnation is certain unless the heart be changed ; because a mind at enmity against God, can not be happy in his presence.

It may, perhaps, be said; That those persons only who are abandoned to wickedness are thus depraved ; but this is not the case with all mankind.—It is confessed, that all men do not discover their depravity by open wickedness. Many persons are under the restraint of education, sense of honor, or a fear of the wrath to come ; whose hearts at the same time remain disaffected to divine things.—Let such persons ask themselves as in the presence of that God who looks through them, and knows every thought afar off, whether
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they do not restrain prayer before him ?—Prefer
 a croud of fabulous publications to the sacred
 volume ?—Whether they are not strangers to the
 duties of private religion ?—Is not God in
 great measure forgotten by them ?—Do they
 not lie down and rise up, without any proper
 sense of him who holdeth their souls in life ?—
 Are not their hearts wholly attached to the
 riches, honors and pleasures of the world ?—
 Will not a small difficulty detain them from the
 place of public worship ?—Would the like dif-
 ficulty prevent their going to an evening's
 amusement ? Why not ?—The reason is obvi-
 ous ; they hate the one and love the other. If
 a preacher happens to exceed his usual length
 in preaching, are they not quite out of patience
 with him ; though they allow the sermon was
 good, and his manner not disagreeable ?—
 Yet would not these very persons be willing to
 remain until midnight at some fashionable en-
 tertainment ?—Are they not fatigued with the
 one, and in raptures with the other ? I ask
 these questions, my friends, that you may de-
 termine what your prevailing taste is. You cer-
 tainly know what you love most : If the world
 and

and the things thereof have the preference, can you believe that you shall be happy in Heaven, where all is holy ? Be not deceived ; for however amiable you may appear in the eyes of the world, one thing is wanting : your hearts must be changed by a divine influence, or you are undone forever.

It is a clear case with me, That should God leave the sinner to himself, and not inflict on him any *positive* punishment at all, the depravity of his own heart would make him entirely miserable, because the very nature of sin separates the soul from God. [Isa. lix. 2.] It follows then, “ Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” [John iii. 3.] In the 5th ver. of the same chapter this change is represented as a being born of the Spirit ; because he effects it. Sometimes it is called a translation, a passing from death to life :—But in 2 Cor. v. 17, we have this striking passage—“ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things pass away ; behold, all things become new.” His views, his joys, his company, his conduct are all new.—His heart is broken for sin as committed a-
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gainst

gainst God ; he lothes himself and repents in dust and ashes.—The divine character appears glorious to him—Christ is precious—sins of heart his constant burden—holiness the thing he longs for.—He feelingly adopts the language of David, “ Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee.” The greatest pleasure he has, is in communion with God.

HIS conduct is changed also : for having believed in God, he is careful to maintain good works.—His religion begins in his heart, and extends its influence over all his behavior ; so that his acquaintance take knowledge of him, that he hath been with Jesus.

THUS the Holy Ghost accompanies the dispensation of the gospel with the exceeding greatness of his power, and enlarges the Redeemer’s kingdom. And thus will he continue to do, until all the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Sion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads : then sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

7th. THE preceding observations relative to the deity and incarnation of Christ, the doctrine of the atonement, and the influence of the Spirit of God in the regeneration of the sinner, naturally lead me to remark, That the doctrine of the Trinity appears to me to be so interwoven with christianity in general, and the plan of apostolic preaching in particular, as to make an essential part of it. The Father is represented as *choosing*—the Son as *redeeming*—and the Holy Ghost as *calling* and *sanctifying*. [Ephs. i. 4.] “According as he, the Father, hath *chosen* us in him.”—Of the Son it is said [Titus ii. 14.] “who gave himself for us, that he might *redeem* us from all iniquity.” And in Titus iii. 5. the apostle assures us, that we are “saved by the washing of regeneration, and *renewing* of the Holy Ghost.” Thus different parts of the work of salvation are attributed to different persons in the Godhead.

BEFORE Jesus Christ left the world he gave the following commission to his apostles, and to their successors in the ministry ;—“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations ; baptising them in the name of the FATHER and of the SON, and of the

the HOLY GHOST :”—[Matt. xxviii. 19.]—
Here we observe in an act of religious worship,
equal honor paid to each person in the Godhead.

ACCORDING to this commission the apostles and primitive preachers acted. They could not do otherwise without being disobedient to the command of Christ : consequently, wherever they preached the gospel and baptized the converts to Christianity, they maintained the doctrine of the Trinity. Nor does it appear, that they had any apprehensions that it would prevent the success of their mission. They knew it to be their duty, to pay a prompt and implicit obedience to their master's orders, and to leave all consequences as to themselves, and his cause with him ; being fully persuaded that he would never command them to believe, or propagate any sentiment that was not perfectly reasonable, though they could not fully comprehend it. Nor do we find that they ever made a single attempt to explain, how it is that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are three persons yet one God ; nor how the divine and human natures were united in Jesus Christ. They maintained

tained this threefold distinction in the Godhead ; and assure us, that “ God was manifest in the flesh ;” but confessed the mystery, and submitted their reason to divine revelation ; in which God’s “ design is to make known *realities* and *facts*, not the *manner* of them.

“ ALMOST every thing in the system of nature, notwithstanding the great improvements in modern philosophy, is attended with difficulties. If you look up to the heavens, you stand astonished at their greatness, and feel yourself incapable of comprehending that immensity which lies beyond those vast spaces which surround us. If you cast your eyes on the earth, you meet with as many mysteries as there are animals, plants, and creatures inanimate. You meet with innumerable difficulties in explaining, the sensation of one, the vegetation of another, and the motion of a third.—If you consider material nature in its wide extremes, of immense greatness, and invisible minuteness, you are struck with amazement and imagination is nonplussed.—If, to the consideration of bodies, you take in that of their duration, time will shew you incomprehensible

hensible wonders ; both in the succession of ages past, and in that which is future.—If you turn your thoughts to spiritual essences, every thing surpasses your comprehension. You cannot comprehend, either their manner of existing, or their manner of acting. Even the human soul is so great a paradox to itself, that it long since despaired, not only of comprehending, but of knowing itself.

“ AND if so, is there any reason to assert, as our adversaries do, that there are *no mysteries* in religion ? Or have they sufficient ground to refuse their assent to our Lord’s eternal Divinity ? so clearly revealed in the Bible, because it is attended with such difficulties as are insuperable to the powers of reason ? Is it any wonder if the difficulties with which we meet in the Christian religion, and especially those that regard the Deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity, should be found greater, much greater, than those which attend a philosophical inquiry into the system of nature ? It would, indeed be a wonder if it were not so ; because the constitution and capacities of our minds bear some proportion

portion to natural objects, which are created and finite ; and are much better qualified to inquire into their causes and properties, their connections and uses, than into those of religion, which are of a spiritual kind, and particularly what relates to the *infinite Godhead*.” *

THIS threefold distinction in the Godhead is mentioned by Paul [2. Cor. xiii. 14.] “ The grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST, be with you all, Amen.” This is evidently a prayer of the apostle addressed to the sacred Three, that all spiritual blessings might be granted to his christian friends at Corinth : He could bless them in no another sense than by praying for them.

To what has been said, I shall only add, 1 John v. 7. “ For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost : and these three are one.” †

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* Dr. ABBADIE on the deity of Christ, p. 326, 327.

† Those persons who wish to see the authenticity of this text excellently vindicated, are advised to read TRAVIS's letters to Dr. GIBBON.

“ I FREELY grant, says an excellent writer, that had I consulted my own reason only, I could not have discovered some mysteries of the gospel. Nevertheless, when I think on the grandeur of God ; when I cast my eyes on that vast ocean ; when I consider that immense ALL ; nothing astonishes me, nothing stumbles me, nothing seems to be inadmissible, however incomprehensible soever it may be. When the subject is Divine, I am ready to believe all, to admit all, to receive all ; provided I be convinced that it is God himself who speaks to me, or any one on his part. After this I am no more astonished that there are three distinct persons in one divine essence ; one God, and yet a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost.—Either religion must tell us nothing about God, or what it tells us must be beyond our capacities ; and in discovering even the borders of this immense ocean, it must needs exhibit a vast extent in which our feeble eyes are lost. But what surprizes me, what stumbles me, what frightens me, is to see a diminutive creature, a contemptible man, a little ray of light glimmering through a few feeble organs, controvert a point with the supreme Being ;

Being ; oppose that intelligence who sitteth at the helm of the world ; question what he affirms, dispute what he determines, appeal from his decisions, and, even after God hath given evidence, reject all doctrines that are beyond his capacity ! Enter into thy nothingness, mortal creature ! What madness animates thee ! How durst thou pretend—thou who art but a point, thou whose essence is but an atom—to measure thyself with the Supreme Being ; with him who fills heaven and earth ; with Him, whom *heaven, the heaven of heavens cannot contain ! Canst thou by searching find out God ? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection ? High as heaven, what canst thou do ? deeper than hell, what canst thou know ?*”*

* Mr. SAURIN's Ser. Vol. I. p. 78, 79. ROBINSON's translation.







S E R M O N III.



8th. **I** PASS to observe, That the apostles plainly and repeatedly preached the doctrine of *divine sovereignty* : Or, that God has an absolute right to dispose of all things, according to his own pleasure.

It has often been objected to this truth, That it represents Almighty God partial to his creatures, by making a distinction among them. —But this ought not to be an objection, because it is a fact, known and read of all men, that he hath placed some in a far more eligible situation than others. In creation we observe the most palpable distinction among the creatures of God.

ANGELS

ANGELS are first in the order of created intelligences ; are said to excel in strength, continually surround the throne of God, and are employed in the most exalted and important services. They are dignified in nature and office.

MEN form the next link in the chain of intelligent agents ; whom Deity hath created with a nature less dignified, endued with inferior mental powers, and employed in a manner less noble and interesting. Among mankind there is also a very obvious distinction. One man is extremely handsome ; another, extremely homely : One has all his parts ; another is deformed, maimed, blind, halt.

THEY differ in mind likewise no less than in body. One person has great sagacity and penetration ; another is an idiot, or but a small remove from him. All minds, though formed by the same Almighty hand, are not of the same dimensions. God himself hath made this difference.

THEY

THEY differ in place or station in life. They are not fitted for, nor employed with equal dignity. All are useful in their place, but not equally so.

THIS being the case, I ask, Will any man dare to censure JEHOVAH for making such distinctions among his creatures ? “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor ?”— Shall the idiot, or the man of small powers of mind say to his Creator, Why was I not made equal to Sir Isaac Newton ?—Or shall that great philosopher say to his Maker, Why was not I created an angel ? We tremble at the idea of thus arraigning the divine conduct. God hath done what he had a right to do ; and hath exercised that right under the influence of infinite wisdom and goodness.

WE observe that the like distinction runs thro’ God’s whole *æconomy of providence*. Some persons have all and abound ; others are depressed with poverty.—Two men shall set out in life with equal prospects and advantages ; one of them

them shall be successful in almost every thing he undertakes ; the other shall meet with repeated losses, and become poor.

SOME persons enjoy a constant and confirmed state of health ; others are always sick, knowing scarce one day in which they are free from pain ; though equally virtuous and temperate.—One passes through the most eminent dangers, and escapes uninjured ; another loses his life by the most trifling occurrence.—One lives to a good old age ; another is cut down from the birth.—One continues till he becomes a burden to himself and friends ; another in the bloom and vigor of his days, is arrested by the last enemy.

THE Deity hath made a difference among mankind with respect to the means of knowledge. Some people remain in the savage state ; while others, favored with every advantage of information, both divine and human, have arrived at a surprizing height of knowledge and refinement. Yet they all belong to the same great family, and are under the government of the same infinite God, who for wise reasons, makes these

these distinctions among them. He could easily have placed all men in circumstances equally agreeable, had it been his will : or have made an entire reverse of condition. He might have ordered your soul or mine to have animated the body of a Laplander, a Hottentot, or an American savage ; but he hath been pleased, as a sovereign God, to place us in a more pleasing condition.

THESE are some of the distinctions which God hath made in the course of his moral government : And who shall say unto him, What doest thou ?

THE sovereignty of God is equally apparent in his conduct towards *sinners*. He hath passed by the fallen angels. “ And the angels which kept not their first estate, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.” [Jude vi.] Their nature the Son of God did not assume, because their salvation was not the end he designed to accomplish : Accordingly we are told, that hell is “ prepared for the devil and his angels.” [Matt. xxv. 41.] Whence it appears that they are passed by.

GOD

God hath made a very important difference among mankind, by sending the gospel to some of them, and withholding it from others. Those persons who are disposed to raise objections either against the benevolence of the Deity, or the truth of divine revelation on this account, would do well to consider, That God himself hath made this distinction, and that he can do no wrong. He is a rock, his way is perfect : nor doth he give account of his matters to any.

BESIDES, it is evident that there is a striking analogy in all his conduct in creation, providence and redemption.—He hath not in either case distributed his blessings on all men alike. This hath been proved already in the preceding observations. If it is necessary therefore to vindicate his conduct in this instance, it is no less necessary in the others. “ But who art thou O man, that repliest against God ? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus ? ”

AMONG those persons who are favored with the gospel, there is also a difference. He takes
one

one of a city, and two of a family and brings them to Sion. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," [Rom. ix. 15, 16, 18.] not by positive influence, but by leaving the sinner to act out his own character, or follow the wickedness of his own heart.—And as mankind universally have by sin subjected themselves to everlasting condemnation, they that are lost will have no just cause of complaint against God ; but will be obliged to acknowledge his justice ; and they who are saved, will ascribe their salvation wholly to his sovereign grace. God condemns none but the guilty ; nor will he save any that had any claim on him ; otherwise salvation would not be by grace.

In the chapter in which the text is, this distinction is most clearly declared. The same gospel that was the wisdom and power of God

to some, was a stumbling-block and foolishness to others : hence Paul thus addressed himself to the Corinthians ; “ For ye see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty : and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are : that no flesh might glory in his presence.” [1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28, 29.] Remark, my brethren, God is here said to choose some and to leave others. Some persons were brought to receive the gospel, while others were left in their unbelief.

PAUL always ascribes his conversion to the *grace* of God. “ When it pleased God who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace”—In another place he says, “ By the grace of God I am what I am.”—If so, it follows as an undeniable truth, That God made a difference between him, and many of his countrymen

trymen the Jews. He was converted to christianity by divine power, while crowds of other sinners were passed by. God could as easily have converted the whole nation as one man, had it been his sovereign pleasure : but you all know he did not ; therefore he made a difference.

WE see in our own day when the Lord revives his work among us, that one is taken and another left. The same sermon that is the means of awakening or comforting one person, leaves others in a secure condition. Under the same religious advantages some are hopely wrought upon, while others maintain their opposition to Jesus Christ.

THAT the success of the gospel, or the conversion of sinners is owing to divine influence, is proved by the current language of scripture. They who believe in Christ, are said to be “ born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God.*” [John i. 12, 13.] Paul says, “ I have planted, Apollos watered, but *God gave the increase.*” [1 Cor. iii. 6.]—We may safely conclude then, that under the dispensation

fation of the gospel, God confers a favor on some, that he does not confer on all.

OUR blessed Lord teaches us this doctrine of divine sovereignty in the following passage, as well as in others that might be mentioned. [Luke x. 21.] "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes ; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

9th. *THE nature and necessity of faith and repentance* were important parts of the preaching of the apostles. They assure us, that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen."—"The belief of the truth," or, a giving credit to the record God gave of his Son. And that we may be capable of distinguishing between living and dead faith, they inform us, that the faith of God's elect, works by love, purifies the heart, esteems Christ precious, and produces good works : "Faith without works is dead being alone."

THE importance of faith appears from various circumstances, such as, That without it we cannot please God—enjoy the consolations of the gospel, nor enter into the kingdom of heaven. “If ye believe not that I am he, said Christ to the Jews, ye shall die in your sins;” [John viii. 24.] that is, under the curse of the law, and perish for ever. The language of the commission needs no comment; “He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.” According to this commission, the apostles constantly urged on sinners the necessity of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God had set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.

THEY also insisted, wherever they went, on the nature and necessity of repentance, as implying a change in the disposition of the mind, without which no man can see the Lord. Peter said to the anxious multitude, [Acts ii. 37, 38,] “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” And Paul assured the Athenians, that “God commanded all men every where to repent, be-
cause

cause he had appointed a day in which he would judge the world in righteousness," &c.—[Acts xvii. 31.]

THE most likely method of bringing mankind to repentance, is to hold up to their view the nature, extent, and perpetuity of the divine law, as holy, just and good ;——reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart—requiring truth in the inward parts, and condemning the sinner for a single inordinate desire, or wrong temper : which law is perpetually, and universally binding. Until heaven and earth pass away, Christ assures us, one jot or tittle of the law shall not fail.—Now by this law is the knowledge of sin ; and when it comes home in its true nature on the conscience, sin revives and the sinner dies, i. e. he stands justly condemned by it as a transgressor, but sees no way of escape. In this condition he remains till Christ is revealed in him : For the law can do nothing but condemn him. It will not accept repentance as a condition of his pardon ; nor can it discover the atonement. Its language is, “ Pay me what thou owest.” At length the sinner is brought

to look on him whom he hath pierced, and to mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and to be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born. He adopts the language of the prophet, saying, "Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." [Jer.xxxi. 19.]

10th. THE apostles dwelt much on the *christian tempers*, and the whole circle of *moral and evangelical obedience*; such as, supreme love to God—benevolence to men—meekness, patience—resignation to the divine will,—forgiveness of injuries,—readiness to relieve the poor, &c. Jesus Christ had taught them these important lessons in his most excellent sermon on the mount, [Matt. 5, 6 and 7 chapters] which contains an immense treasure of most precious truths and exhortations: after which they copied in their own preaching. Hence they thus address us, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."—"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts."—

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“Let the same mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus.”—“If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”—These are mentioned as a specimen of their zeal; to promote personal holiness among the disciples of Christ.

THEY also persuaded believers to give themselves up to the Lord and to his church, by a public submission to the two leading institutions of the new testament, baptism and the Lord's supper; that they might become witnesses for Christ, and enjoy the special privileges of his house.—In a word, They urged with constancy and zeal the great importance of good works, as evidences and fruits of faith; and that others seeing them, might be excited to glorify their Father who is in heaven.

11th. THEY often brought into view the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, and the final states of men. On the first of these Paul enlarges with great strength and propriety of reasoning in 1 Cor. xv; to which I refer you.

THEY

THEY also assure us in language calculated to awaken all our attention; That Jesus Christ will descend from heaven with a shout; the voice of the arch-angel; and the trump of God: That the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth and all that is therein shall be burnt up. Then they who have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life; and they who have done evil to the resurrection of damnation. O, how solemn will be this concluding scene! The last trump will awake the sleeping millions.—The sea give up the dead that are in it:—death and hell give up the dead that are in them—and all crowd around that throne on which the Judge is seated, from whose sentence there will be no appeal!—Amazement all!—

THE different characters of men are marked—all carry their destination in their countenances.—The righteous fly to meet their glorious Judge, their Savior and their Friend, and bid him welcome ten thousand times.—Their hearts beat high with joy and praise—Each eye beams peace, and all the innumerable multitude of re-

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deemed

deemed sinners sing, "Lo this is our God, we have waited for him; we will rejoice and be glad in his salvation."—These he shall place on his right hand.

BUT the ungodly approach with horror and despair: for their consciences at this fatal moment more than ever, anticipate their doom; hence they "say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" [Rev. vi. 16, 17.] —These the Judge shall place on his left hand.—The critical and decisive moment is arrived— all nations are before him: they are separated the one from the other as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.—To them on his right hand he will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. ————— Then shall he say also unto

unto them on his left hand, " Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels : for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me not in : naked, and ye clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.—And these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal." [Matt xxv, 31—end.]—Thus the solemn scene is closed—" They that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the *door was shut.*"

" ETERNITY, the various sentence past,
 Assigns the sever'd throng distinct abodes,
 Sulphureous, or ambrosial ; What ensues ?
 The deed predominant ! the deed of deeds !
 Which makes a hell of hell, a heav'n of heav'n.
 The Goddess, with determin'd aspect turns
 Her adamantine key's enormous size
 Through destiny's inextricable wards,
 Deep-driving ev'ry bolt, on both their fates.
 Then, from the chrystal battlements of heav'n,
 Down, down, she hurls it thro' the dark profound
 Ten thousand thousand fathom ; there to rust,
 And ne'er unlock her resolution more."*

III. I PASS

* Dr. Young's Night Thoughts, p. 22, 221.

III. I PASS to shew, That God hath put the most distinguished honor on these doctrines, by making them the means of saving them who believe.

THEY were not only remarkably successful during the first age of the church, when thousands were converted to the christian faith, [See Acts ii. 41.—iv. 4, &c.] but have been so at different periods since down to the present day.

“ BEFORE the destruction of Jerusalem the gospel was not only preached in the less Asia, and Greece and Italy, the great theatres of action then in the world; but was likewise propagated as far northward as Scythia, as far southward as Ethiopia, as far eastward as Parthia and India, as far westward as Spain and Britain.” *

DURING the three first centuries, the gospel was preached with great success, notwithstanding the violence of persecution. The more the christians were oppressed the more they grew; hence it became a maxim, That “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

FROM

* Bp. NEWTON on the Prophecies, Vol. II. p. 237.

FROM the time of the death of Constantine till the reformation from popery, the church passed through various dark and trying scenes. Sometimes she appeared to be near destruction, "This is the darkest and most dismal day that ever the church saw, and probably the darkest it ever will see." Yet through all that period God raised up some faithful witnesses for his cause: among whom, by general consent of ecclesiastical writers, we are to place the Waldenses,* who are said by some authors, to have preserved and handed down the apostolic doctrines pure, from primitive times to the days of Luther.†

REINERUS their violent enemy tells us, "That of all sects that ever were, none were so pernicious to the church of Rome as the Leonists or Waldenses; and that for these reasons: 1. For their *antiquity* and long continuance, even from the time of pope Sylvester, who was made Pope
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* For a full account of these pious people, see MOSHEIM'S Eccles. History.

† The confession of their faith shews their attachment to the apostolic doctrines.

in the year 316; or, as others have affirmed, from the time of the apostles. 2. For the *universality* of that sect, because there was scarce any country where they were not. 3. When all other heretics, by reason of their blasphemy against God, were abhorred, the Waldenses had a great appearance of piety, because they lived justly before men, believed all things well of God, and had the articles of the creed, only they blasphemed the church and clergy of Rome.” *

AFTER this long night of error and persecution, during which period, the witnesses were few, and were obliged to prophecy in sackcloth, the reformation took place. Wickliff appeared in England, whose disciples became numerous—Luther and Melancthon in Germany—John Hufs and Jerome in Bohemia—Zuinglius and others in Switzerland. It would be almost endless to mention the names of the worthy men in different parts of the world, whom God raised up to befriend the truths of the gospel: many of whom sealed them with their blood.

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* GILLER's success of the gospel, Vol. I. p. 39.

If we consult the history of the church since the reformation, we shall find that God hath set his seal to the apostolic doctrines in different parts of the world, by making them the means of great reformati^ons among mankind. In England, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, America, &c. there have been remarkable revivals of religion ; at which times crowds of sinners have been turned from darkness to light. Whole towns and villages have become serious and reformed——places of public worship, at such seasons, were crowded with anxious enquirers ; and converts have come like the clouds and the doves to their windows. *

It is readily granted, That the great end of the preaching of the gospel, is to make mankind wiser and better. When therefore the wicked are reformed, churches filled with members who adorn their profession ; and the youth especially are made willing to become the followers of the Lamb of God, at a period of life, when they are most capable of enjoying the pleasures of sense, we may safely call this *the work of God.*
And

And blessed be his name, such have been the effects of the faithful ministry among all denominations of christians, who have maintained the apostolic doctrines. You must be sensible, my brethren, if you have been observant, that those men have been the most successful, who have been most engaged in preaching the humbling doctrines of the cross. God hath put distinguished honor on them, by giving them many seals to their ministry, as their joy and crown.

WHENCE we infer,

I. THAT the ministers of the gospel have the greatest encouragement, to preach the same doctrines in every age of the world.

THOSE persons are quite mistaken who think, that the gospel can be rendered agreeable to natural men as such : they may be changed into the spirit of it by the power of God, but the gospel remains the same. Or the preachers of it may leave out, or explain away its most exceptionable parts, and thereby obtain the character of *rational* and *moderate* men : but let it be remembered in that case, it is no longer Paul's gospel, or christianity as taught by Christ and his

his apostles they preach ; rather something quite different from it ; by which they may *amuse* mankind, but they have no just reason to believe it will be the means of their conversion.

THE nearer we come in preaching to the sentiments and manner of the apostles, I humbly conceive, the greater reason we have to expect success. The *sentiments* have been considered ; of the *manner* I beg leave to say—They preached *plainly*, that all who heard them might understand them ; and *faithfully*, that God, their own consciences, or the people might not reproach them. They did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God ; nor use ambiguous expressions, to prevent its being known what their real sentiments were ; but took a side like faithful men ; nor feared any consequences, while engaged in, what they believed to be, the cause of God and truth.

EVERY man has an undoubted right to think for himself, and to publish his principles to the world : and in this enlightened and liberal age he has nothing to fear as to his person. And though his sentiments may be opposed, his fidelity will entitle him to respect from mankind ; who continue to revere an honest man.

THE apostles were also *diligent* in the work of the Lord : were instant in season, out of season. "I have taught you publicly, says Paul, and from house to house." Their hearts glowed with love to God, and to the souls of men ; hence they were willing to spend and to be spent in the sacred service. In public and private life they were examples to the flock.

THEY preached with a *pathos* that arose out of the infinite importance of the subjects of their ministry ; which had a natural tendency to fix the attention of their hearers, and to convince them that they were in earnest.—They felt their subjects, and they made others feel. Felix, a Roman governor, trembled before Paul his prisoner, while he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.—King Agrippa was forced to acknowledge, that Paul had almost persuaded him to be a christian.

2. WHAT has been said, suggests to them who have been long in the ministry, and have had but little success, the serious enquiry, Whether they have plainly and faithfully preached the apostolic doctrines ?

doctrines ? Or, whether they have not been ashamed of the gospel of Christ?—If the latter has been the case, no wonder they have dragged on heavily in the work ; and with very few, if any, seals to their ministry : for God will reprove such unfaithfulness in his service.

TRUE indeed, it sometimes happens, that the *faithful* ministers of the gospel are for a season unsuccessful ; yet they ought not to be discouraged, for in due time they shall reap if they faint not. They who go forth weeping bearing precious seed, shall finally return rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.—But suppose they should not see the fruit of their labors in this life, they will have the testimony of conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have had their conversation in the world.—Let them who sow, sow in hope :—The word shall not return void, but it shall accomplish that which God pleaseth, and prosper in the thing whereto he sent it.

3. SHOULD these discourses fall into the hands of any young men, who wish to engage in the work

work of the ministry, they will excuse me if I say, They ought *first* to ask themselves, Whether they have ever felt the transforming power of the gospel on their hearts. Ministers of Christ ought certainly to know the truth by a happy experience, or they will be blind leaders of the blind. "A preacher's first and supreme quality, that which must give life and vigour to his compositions, and just scope to all his talents, lies in his being a good man, I mean a lover of God, and a friend of men. A preacher who has not felt the power, and imbibed the spirit of christianity, is the most unfit person in the world, to teach and recommend it to others." *

IN such a condition he will find it a very hard service, to be always engaged in praying, studying, preaching, answering cases of conscience, visiting the sick and dying, &c. because, whatever he may be in appearance, his heart is unfriendly to the work. If on the other hand, he has felt the gospel coming with power, the Holy Ghost, and much assurance, he will love it, because

* FORDYCE'S Art of preaching, p. 100.

because it tends to advance the glory of God, and the salvation of sinners. Having been made happy by the gospel himself, he longs that others should taste and see that the Lord is gracious. With such a temper it becomes his meat and drink, to be daily engaged in the various parts of ministerial duty.—He puts on no forbidding airs,—is easy of access; and by his benevolence, affability and piety, invites the distressed of every description, to enter into the freest conversation with him: and enjoys a most sensible pleasure, when he is the means of lessening the distresses of mankind, whether of soul or body.

4. *In fine*: We infer, That while the ministers of the gospel are obliged to maintain all the parts of the sacred system, so far as they understand them, they ought to insist most of all on those, that are immediately calculated to promote the greatest good of mankind:—Such for instance, as tend to awaken the stupid conscience—direct the anxious sinner to Christ—and edify and build up believers in their most holy faith: i. e. To enlighten and reform the world.

THE positive institutions of religion are *secondary* objects ; and though good in their place, ought by no means to be set in competition with the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and the various christian tempers.

A PIOUS man of a liberal mind is anxious most of all that sinners should be converted to Jesus Christ. This end accomplished he feels happy ; and is willing that every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind, with respect to what are called, the *circumstantials* of religion.—He can truly say, “ Send Lord by whom thou wilt send.”—If the Redeemer’s kingdom is advanced in the world, he rejoiceth let who will be the instruments of it ; or, let it be among what denomination of christians it may.

IT is to be lamented, my brethren, that those christians who are united in the most essential truths of the gospel, should contend so much as they do about rites and ceremonies. Such conduct tends to create animosities, separate friends, and is very injurious to the general interests of religion. It looks as if we were
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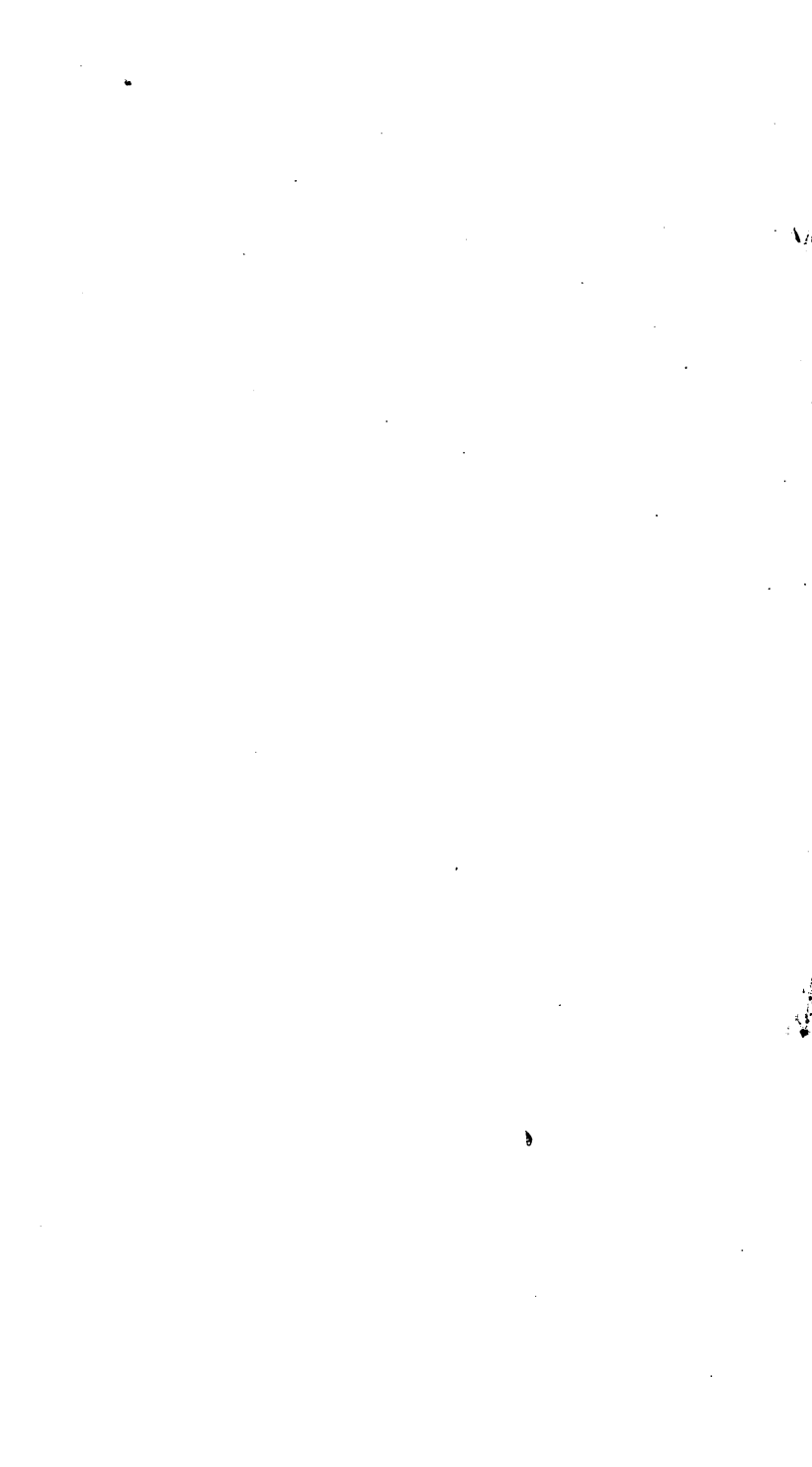
more engaged to convert sinners to our party, than to Jesus Christ. Let us walk together as far as we can agree ; and when we are brought to a stop by different opinions or practices, let us agree to differ ; and by no means fall out by the way.—We are embarked in a common and glorious cause ; let us then contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.—Iniquity abounds, the love of many waxeth cold, and false doctrines of extraordinary magnitude prevail.—Let us then stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

“ Now unto Him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father : to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. AMEN.”

E R R A T A.

The whole marginal note in the 6th and 7th pages, should have been marked for a quotation.

Page 7. line 7, from the bottom—for “*natural*” read *unnatural*.



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